Delay in disposal of consumer cases

1669. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of cases in various consumer disputes redressal forums in the country are still pending for several years;

(b) whether there is a clear provision in the consumer act to provide justice to the consumers within 90 days;

(c) if so, the reasons for the delay in quick disposal of pending cases; and

(d) the action taken by Government to provide justice to the consumers within the stipulated time frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) As per the information made available by the National Commission, 25052 cases in the National Commission, 242308 cases in the State Commissions and 1578074 cases in the District Forums have been filed since their inception, out of which 17712 cases have been disposed of by the National Commission, 150490 cases by the State Commissions and 1334371 cases by the District Forums. 7340 cases are pending with the National Commission, 91818 cases with the State Commissions and 243703 cases with the District Forums for disposal. The overall disposal rate is 81.4%.

(b) According to the provisions of the Rules framed under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 the National Commission, State Commissions and District Forums set up under the Act are required to dispose of cases, as far as possible, within 90 days from the date of receipt of the Notice by the opposite party and within 150 days if it requires analysis or testing of the commodity in question.

(c) The disposal of cases by the consumer disputes redressal agencies in the country is mainly affected by the inadequate infrastructure, adjournments, non-filling of the posts of the Presidents/Members in the consumer disputes redressal agencies.

(d) Following are the some of the important steps taken for the speedy disposal of pending cases in the consumer forums:—

i) One-Time-Grant of Rs. 61.80 crores provided to the States/UTs by the Central Government to strengthen the infrastructure of the consumer disputes redressal agencies;

ii) Monitoring of the working of consumer disputes redressal agencies through the National Commission;

iii) States and Union Territories requested to take prompt steps to fill up vacant posts of President/Member in the consumer disputes redressal agencies and maintain a panel of suitable candidates for appointment as President/Member;

iv) amendment to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 and the Rules framed thereunder to facilitate quicker disposal of cases by the redressal agencies.

Quality of jewellery

1670. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the consumers of gold jewellery are being cheated by way of not keeping the quality specifications;

(b) whether it is a fact that the survey done by the BIS revealed that 88 percent of the samples they had collected do not meet the quality specifications; and

(c) if so, what measures Government propose to take to monitor the quality of the jewellery sold through consumer outlets in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has launched a Hallmarking Scheme of Gold Jewellery in April, 2000 to protect consumers from being cheated while purchasing gold jewellery. Certification of purity of Gold Jewellery under this Scheme is being done in accordance with the Indian Standard IS: 1417: 1999.